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January 27, 1951

Dear Mr. Secretary:

United States plans in relation to the Middle East have been the subject of several recent discussions between Department representatives and top officials of the Department of Defense, including the Joint Chiefs individually and the Operations Deputies as a group.

The position of the Department in these discussions has been that more affirmative United States action is required to safeguard our vital security interests in the Middle East. The need for such action is made urgent by the political deterioration which has taken place in the area to such an extent that it is questionable whether the United States, without taking more affirmative action, can continue to count on the support of many of the Middle East countries.

I wish to make it clear at the outset that the proposals advanced by the Department do not involve the United States in a Middle East security pact or in a commitment of combat forces in the Middle East. I understand the Joint Chiefs of Staff feel such steps are not possible under present circumstances because our main effort must be in Western Europe and because of our commitments in the Far East. Nor do our proposals affect the primary responsibility of the United Kingdom and British Commonwealth to provide armed forces for the defense of the Middle East. Within these limits, however, we believe that the considerable assistance which the United States is now furnishing to certain individual countries of the Middle East can be made more effective, and British primary military responsibility for the area can be made more meaningful, through the coordination of

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The Honorable
George C. Marshall,
Secretary of Defense,
Washington, D. C.

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American, British and indigenous efforts under a concept of the defense of the Middle East as a whole.

The programs of military aid to Greece, Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia are currently under review by our Departments. Apart from the problems relating to those individual programs, I wish to ask for the views of the Department of Defense on the following proposals:

1. That the United States make it clear to all of the countries of the Middle East that the United States in coordination with the United Kingdom is prepared to assist them in strengthening their capabilities to defend the area as a whole against aggression.

2. That the United States furnish small training missions and individual service technicians to the Arab States and Israel to assist them in the development of fighting groups and techniques which are best suited to local capabilities and terrain and to the defense of the Middle East as a whole.

3. That the number of Arab and Israeli trainees in the United States military schools be increased.

4. That the United States furnish, in conjunction with the training in paragraph 2, token quantities of arms and ammunition (of the order of magnitude of $5-10 million) to the Arab States and Israel on a cash reimburseable basis, making it very clear that greater quantities cannot be made available for another 12-18 months.

These token quantities could be diverte[illegible] programs for Greece, Turkey and Iran by dela[illegible]es to these countries: if such a course is absolu[illegible]y, we believe on political grounds that the diver[illegible] made.

5. That the United States discuss wit[illegible]d Kingdom the establishment in the Middle East of a com[illegible]ilitary mission, or establishment of a separate United States military mission for the purposes of:

a. stimulating and coordinating the military efforts of all of the Middle East countries for the defense of the Middle East as a whole;

b. creating

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b. creating stability in depth in the Arab States and Israel so as to enable Greece, Turkey and Iran to make the most effective use of the fighting power we are developing there;

c. coordinating in terms of the concept of area defense the activities of the United States and United Kingdom military missions in the individual countries; and

d. stimulating and coordinating, with appropriate backstopping in Washington and London, United States and United Kingdom planning to make the maximum effective use of available resources for the defense of the area.

I am enclosing a document which contains further information explaining the views of the Department. It has been suggested that it would be useful to hold, and we would welcome, a discussion of our proposals with the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a group as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

NEA:JBHoward:jrw:mjb
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